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JrCOSTEP – Summer 2005
East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma
Santa Fe, New Mexico – Albuquerque Area

I enjoy traveling and doing a variety of different jobs. I also enjoy working with Native American peoples. During my sophomore year, Charity Nelson (a former ECU graduate) and Chris Buchanan came to my school and gave a presentation on the USPHS. They both work for IHS. They discussed their duties and the benefits of joining the USPHS. After that, I was hooked. I applied for an Environmental Health JrCOSTEP with IHS in fall of my junior year.

I received a telephone call from Lt. Commander Celeste Davis, District Environmental Health Officer for the Santa Fe Service Unit in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She said that she had received my resume and was interested in an ECU student (herself being an ECU graduate) coming out to work for her. I told her I was definitely interested. I've been through New Mexico and out to Arizona and California, so I was excited that I'd get to work in the southwest.



When I arrived, I worked with LTJG Christian Witkovskie, Field Environmental Health Officer and Anthony Candelaria, Environmental Health Technician. Both offered a wealth of knowledge and helped me understand my duties. The experience covered a variety of tasks in different aspects of environmental health. These tasks included: rabies clinics, food and water sanitation surveys, rabies and other investigations, seatbelt surveys, food, injury, and personal safety trainings given to the Pueblos, attending their celebrations to conduct food sanitation surveys, and personal trainings in environmental health-related issues. After completing sanitation surveys, I also typed and filed reports in WebEHRS (a web-based database). Additionally, one of the engineering COSTEPs and I were assigned to complete a community profile on the Pueblo of Tesuque. This included gathering basic information on the pueblo and analyzing it.

Although the work is great, Santa Fe and the surrounding areas offer many activities in the form of recreation. I have enjoyed walking around the Plaza, going to the museum, seeing many historic sites, white water rafting in Taos, hiking to amazing and beautiful landmarks within the pueblos, and hanging out with new friends that I have made out here. I have also been to Carlsbad Caverns National Park. That was amazing! I have enjoyed meeting the people and experiencing their culture. They are so full of life and laughter.

My experience in Santa Fe as a COSTEP has been one where I can grow as a person and as an environmental health scientist. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to apply the knowledge that I have learned in school to the field and completing work on my own. I recommend doing a COSTEP for anyone interested in different experiences, both work-related and otherwise.